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ABSTRACT

This study engaged the narratives and conversations of five white teachers in an urban school district as they explored the implications associated with seeing themselves as raced individuals. It also explored how an awareness of these narratives shaped the instructional environment created by these teachers. An important element in the analysis was the "silences," paying attention to what was not being said. Race was the absent identity category in the conversations: whites do not describe themselves as white; rather, white is the norm, the given. Data analysis suggested several implications: (1) much of teacher education considers multicultural education from a white perspective for the purpose of learning about the other; (2) a pedagogy that engages race and culture in the classroom invites difference, acknowledges difference, and creates a learning environment in which all students are encouraged to learn as a result of their difference; (3) a vital component of teacher education should be to develop educational experiences providing opportunities for future teachers to critically examine the instructional decisions that they make in their classrooms; and (4) although whites need to become cognizant of themselves as raced and specifically of their positions as white educators, they can only do so with the assistance of persons of color. (Contains 38 references.) (ND)

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Making Our White Selves Intelligible to Ourselves: Implications for Teacher Education

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Introduction

Christine Sleeter (1993b) states that teachers bring to their classrooms a perspective of what they understand race to mean, constructed from their life experiences and personal agendas. She goes on to argue that "a predominantly White teaching force in a racist and multicultural society is not good for anyone, if we wish to have schools reverse rather than reproduce racism" (p. 157). While this may be true, the position posited by Sleeter is problematic given the frequency with which the literature presents statistics which bemoan the fact that the "teaching population in the US is becoming increasingly White while the student population becomes increasingly racially diverse" (Sleeter, 1993b, p. 157). "When we speak of educating teachers for diversity, we are speaking of educating for the most part, White, middle class females" (Shaw, 1995, p. 48). As public schools and particularly urban schools are increasingly called upon to meet the needs of a diverse student population with a fairly homogenous pool of teaching professionals, it becomes increasingly important to examine the implications for such a task.

Powell concludes that "[a] primary role of multicultural education . . . is to make Whites aware of their own cultural identity [i.e. their identity as raced individuals], so that they might begin to take seriously the perspectives of others who differ from themselves" (1995, p. 2). Like Powell, I agree that we can no longer afford to deliberate the ideal composition of students in teacher education programs, but rather that we should take seriously the challenge to engage

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preservice and inservice teachers in such a way that they are best able to create a learning environment which provides opportunities for a diverse student population.

All this points to the need to interrogate the theory of color evasiveness[1] and to provide a forum which allows educators, particularly White educators teaching in urban school systems, to examine the degree to which they pride themselves on being indifferent to color. The need to examine the notion that as White teachers they supposedly treat "others" the same and do not identify individuals as raced, as well as how they fail to recognize themselves as raced individuals. Through a continuing denial that one does not see color and that race does not matter, educators remain unable to critique the unnamed practices in their classrooms that perpetuate a denial that race does matter. Marita Golden (1995) writes that "there's such a tendency in our society for 'well-meaning' people to brush differences aside, from fear, ignorance, whatever. So much pressure to homogenize" (p. 5).

Purpose of the Study

The primary intent of this study is to engage the narratives and conversations of White teachers in an urban school district as they explore the implications associated with seeing themselves as raced individuals. It is also to explore how an awareness of these narratives shapes the instructional environment created by these teachers in their classrooms. Specifically, it attempts to:

1. Explore the discourses of the absence and presence of race, namely whiteness, in the United States. Who determines those who are raced, and what does it mean? Does this question gesture toward the need to reconceptualize our understandings of race, ethnicity, and culture in urban schools?

2. Analyze the implications for multicultural teacher preservice and inservice education through a critical, qualitative inquiry. If the majority of persons in the teaching profession are White and have not thought about what it means to be White, how does this affect the "doing" of preservice and inservice education with a focus on preparing White teachers to

educate students of color and on the consequent decisions all teachers make when working with a diverse student population?

Why an Examination of Whiteness?

The conversations with these White teachers does not center on a discussion of the existence or denial of racism, but rather is a probing of the idea of an unacknowledged existence on the part of Whites as being raced, and the inherent social realities (i.e., White privilege) due to the color of their skin as White teachers, just as there are certain social realities (i.e., denial of access) for Blacks and other persons of color because of the color of their skin. Many multicultural educators believe that the path to democracy and equality is obtained via an understanding and acceptance of diversity (see for example Bennett, 1990). Spivak (1993) challenges this "liberal multiculturalism" which continues to "circl[e] around the possibility of story-lines, even the story-lines that put one 'culture' over against another" (p. 133). Further, Cornel West (hooks & West, 1991) reminds us that "White scholars are bringing certain baggage with them when they look at Black culture," (p. 36), or any culture that is "other" for that matter. This is one of the reasons that I choose to engage in a study which involves my own and White teachers' examination of Whiteness. Race does shape White teachers' lives, as profoundly but perhaps less perceptibly as it does teachers of color.[2]

I am not looking at non-Whiteness. I am not engaged in a discussion specifically of White racism. Nor am I apologizing for the language that I have inherited to engage in the discourse, but rather I am *interested in stimulating a conversation which begins to open up what it means for White people, specifically White teachers, to examine and talk about what it means to be White, before stumbling headlong into an attempt to understand those we have labeled as "others" by virtue of their non-Whiteness, defined only in the negation of ourselves.* Further, I am not comfortable with a use of labels (e.g., race, people of color) connoting multiple meanings which I as researcher and you as reader rely on in order for some semblance of intelligible communication to occur.[3]

Research Questions

In order to address the concerns presented thus far, the study was guided by the following questions:

I. How do educators understand a (re)examination of race as a social construction?

   A. How do educators engage in a discourse which serves to "focus attention on the *continuing significance and changing meaning of race*" [emphasis in original], (Omi and Winant, 1993, p. 3).

   B. How do educators understand instructional (curricular and pedagogical) decisions as informed by a recognized presence of race?

II. How does a specific group of White teachers in an urban school system view themselves as raced individuals?

   A. What has contributed to their own conceptions of race?

   B. How might their involvement as co-researchers in an "openly-ideological" (Lather, 1986) research study change these conceptions?

III. What motivates these White teachers to engage in a discussion of whiteness?

   A. How do they, in viewing themselves as raced individuals, engage as hooks (1994) suggests, in a radical pedagogy which insists that the presence and difference of all is recognized and valued?

   B. What are the implications for how they might begin to design instruction and create learning environments according to a radical pedagogy?

Research Design

For this study, I relied on the convergence and divergence of multiple theories (e.g., feminism, postmodernism, poststucturalism, multiculturalism, critical theory) to inform my research design, to help me ascertain the askable questions, and to question my own (mis)informed assumptions. Further, I engaged the information obtained from multiple sources (interviews, observations, discussion groups, documents), as I juxtaposed one against the other. I did not solicit information from multiple sources in an attempt to converge on Truth from different angles

as is the case with triangulation in a traditional sense[4] but rather as a way to change my perspective and search for unseen contradictions and images. I used triangulation, then, as a way to continually search for unnoticed contradictions and unheard silences -- as part of the process of situating my research as a work in progress.

Site Selection and Sampling

A three-hour course titled, "Multicultural Issues in Education," was offered through the College of Education Spring Quarter 1995. The primary instructor for the course was the director of the Office of Multicultural Education for the school district in which I conducted my study, although other staff members and additional outside speakers were brought in to address specific topics. Several members from the Multicultural Education Office had taken the course from a University instructor. Graduate credit was awarded for the class, therefore allowing teachers to take the course in fulfillment of the multicultural education requirement for a Masters degree.

I engaged as a student during the first half of the quarter and as a participant/observer during the second half of the quarter. Even after everyone in the class knew that I was there as a "researcher," I purposefully chose not to tape record any of the sessions. I did not want to emphasize my role as researcher over that as student, nor did I wish to inhibit the freedom with which class members felt that they could respond to sensitive issues such as racism and sexism.

In the second half of the quarter, an informed consent form was distributed to all class members, seeking participants for the study. Class members were given several options regarding the degree of involvement. Continued participation could involve individual interviews only, prolonged involvement in the form of a group which would meet during the summer months, or collaboration as co-researchers and/or co-presenters. From those who indicated an interest in continued participation, I selected five participants.

Purposeful sampling as described by Patton (1990) provided a framework for the selection of participants so as to select "information-rich cases" for in-depth study (p. 169). Because I am interested in the population of White teachers and how their understanding of themselves as raced individuals informs pedagogy (both as it effects inservice for teachers and also their interactions as

White, middle-class teachers with an increasing proportion of minority students), I selected a homogenous sample, in this case homogenous by race and homogenous by school system.

I engaged in conversations with a group of five White teachers, four female and one male, who currently teach in an urban school district in a large mid-western city. Two of the teachers are at the elementary level, one at the middle school level, one at the high school level, and one in a center for severe behaviorally handicapped children.

Research Methods

The study progressed in four phases. In Phase I, I reviewed texts and engaged in conversations which explore the socially constructed nature of race in the United States, specifically the construction of whiteness. Phase II consisted of my engaging in a 10–week course as a participant/observer, and Phase III consisted of a series of interviews, conversations, and group exchanges. Phase IV consisted of the analysis and representation of the information gathered.

The primary sources of research information for the study were gathered in Phase III. This phase consisted of a series of interviews, conversations, and group exchanges. Sources for this phase of the research included audiotapes of all interviews, journals from both myself and my co–participants, observation notes, and articles or other materials given to me by research participants. Feminist and poststructuralist theory were key in facilitating an expanded interpretation of interviewing practices (see Kvale 1992, Lather 1991, Oakley 1981, Reinharz 1992, Scheurich 1995, and Visweswaran, 1994). The group conversations took place over a six-week period during the summer. I met with the participants as a group for approximately 2 1/2 hours every other Wednesday, beginning July 12, 1995. After the school term began in the fall, I also conducted individual interviews at the time I observed the classrooms of two of the participants. I met with the participants as a group one final time in January 1996 after I had begun the initial analysis and write-up of our conversations.

Defining Absences: A Theoretical Beginning

What are the "politically correct" answers and attitudes presented by myself and these White educators which, in the words of Umberto Eco (1983), have to be better than the "real thing" in order to be believable (p. 8)? What are the unintelligible truths masked by our whiteness which blanket and conceal, which are present in the silence of absence? How do the conversations reveal the truths which are unintelligible even to those who speak them? What are the "safe" topics we discuss that white wash discourses of race and culture? How might we begin to recognize that which is absent and unknowable to ourselves?

I began to foreground the absences and silences in my analysis. What were the absences in the conversations, perhaps things that I would liked to have heard, but no more important as a voiced presence than they were as a silent absence: confusion absent of emotion; recognition of actions motivated by racism absent of an awareness of one's own racist actions or beliefs; intellectual discussions of White privilege absent of a recognition of how we as White educators continue to deny, protect, and (re)inscribe the privilege; absence of an expressed fear which I suspect would be present were we as Whites to begin to question our own identity as raced? How might I pay attention to the absences with the same degree of attentiveness with which I had paid attention to that which was spoken? What would it mean for me to begin to listen to the silence?

A probing of the silence began to reveal several things to me which did indeed demand my attention. Upon closer examination, I began to see that although the focus of our conversations was race, awareness by the teachers of themselves as raced (i.e., as having a race -- White) was in fact absent from the conversations. When asked how they described themselves, the teachers included many descriptors (e.g., female, Christian, Jewish, learner, mother, sister, etc.) but race as a descriptor was not among them. It was also absent from the description of themselves presented in the form of biographies. Because whiteness was and continues to be constructed as the norm, it is rendered invisible (Powell, 1995).

Further, when asked how they saw themselves as raced, the discussion focused not on what it means to be White, but rather, for example, how they responded differently as women

when encountering a White man unknown to them on the street versus the different visceral reaction to a similar encounter with a Black man unknown to them.[5]

Lisa How do you view yourself as raced, or non-raced, or not raced?

Carolyn As having a race?

Lisa Yes.

Marcy I was thinking about, sometimes I go to the grocery store late at night and this is bothering me this year, these past two years more than last year. And I always try, you know, look around and see who's there but I'm more fearful of a Black man when I'm alone than a White and it shouldn't be that way. Well any stranger, but I notice that there is something in me. My gut feeling is that I need to walk faster, I need to get in the store, get my keys out, well always, but you're just more fearful and I don't know.

Marcia I feel it everyday. I mean, I feel there's a distinction between White and Black. . . I do what Marcy does, you know, when I see a Black man I go through an entire thought process. Why am I doing that? And I think that's at least the first step in something that's good, when you've been exposed to an all raced, one-raced world.

The question I asked which prompted a discussion of these White women's reaction to encountering an unknown man on the street was, "How do you view yourself as raced or non-raced, or not raced?" The answer is in the absence. The women did not respond to how they see themselves as raced or not. Rather they talked about their reaction to a male other. Did they fear that to see themselves as raced would mean to also see themselves as racist? Was the concept unintelligible to the point that they could only talk about who they do recognize as being raced, namely Blacks? Gilliam (1995) echoes this assertion when she states, "Neither white men nor white women seem to know how to talk about issues of race" (p. 261).

What I began to do then was not to ignore the silences, nor to collect more "data" in search of what was missing, but rather to pay attention to what was not being said. Similarly, as one considers a musical rest as a purposeful silence, an absence with meaning, I began to view (hear) silences as purposeful metaphors -- "metaphor[s] as a detour to truth" (Spivak, 1976, p. lxxiv) -- masking a truth residing in the "borrowed dwelling of a metaphor" (p. lxxiv). What were the "truths" being masked in the metaphor of silence? How was I to seek strategies for hearing the silences in order to be able to break those silences (Morrison, 1992)?

Race as an Absent Identity Category for Whites

Lisa — How do you describe yourselves in the context of this group . . .in terms of personal characteristics,[6] thinking maybe about what you did with your cultural heritage project?

Tom — I found the project where in class we had to use one word to describe ourselves, to be . . . difficult, and some of the answers that people came up with *really* were unsettling to me.

How many people used a religious word to describe themselves, that kind of startled me. I know why you did (referring to Marcy who is Jewish), we were talking about it, but how many people used Christian as the one word that they choose to describe themselves. That, from a group of teachers, that's a value that someone is going to be taking into the classroom with them, I would think, if we are talking about imposing values.

Carolyn — That's interesting because I thought of the same thing. I thought of that exercise when you said how would you describe yourself. And I think I said female. . . . my husband's family, they are very Scottish and they do the tartans and the whole thing, and so my kids kind of know that. I almost took that for my own but I didn't. . . . mine was female, my rural English background, and my German Catholic background. Those three together, that's the best I could come up with. John's comment on my paper was that it was good that I brought out gender because so few people did, and that was a major, major descriptive term on that one exercise. So that surprised me. But that was interesting.

Marcy — I brought out Jewish and I also brought out single parent because I identify so much with that . . . But it's hard to put it into one word.

Anne — I had trouble with my cultural heritage report also. I took it from my father's side which is basically an English background but basically what I did because that had been instilled in me a lot was I took the views, I forgot to point out female. I took it from the view of how I was raised, and basically the 360 degree turn I've done to now.

Marcia — I was one of those that said Christian that night (laughing nervously) and when we were talking about terms, that's who I am as far as that's what I was steeped in as a child. I went to church three or four times a week and my extended family members were the people that I went to church with, so that's very much, even in my cultural heritage project, that's the second thing that I pointed out.

Race is the absent identity category in this conversation. It is also absent from the descriptions these teachers give of themselves presented in the form of biographies. As Whites, we don't describe ourselves as White: it is the norm, it is a given, it is assumed, present in the absence of naming unless designated otherwise. I describe myself as Italian, and in some ways that absolves me from having to consider the racial privileges accorded me as a White person of European (even Southern European) heritage. As Whites, we describe ourselves as learners, as

Jews and Christians, even as men and women, but the thought never occurs to us to include White as part of the descriptor. As Tom remarked, "Whites have always been sort of the non-race . . . often you didn't have to fill anything out, there wasn't a box to check until recently, and that's Caucasian non-Hispanic." We describe ourselves in the same way that we describe our students in essentialist, fixed understandings as if to say that by describing myself as a woman or as a Christian, or Jew, that should reveal something about myself -- something implied to be understood without further interpretation.

We say that color doesn't matter, and it doesn't matter to us and our identity as Whites, but it does matter because it is in the very fabric of how we talk about and label our students. When Marcy states, "I am having trouble with the Black girls in my class. I'm not prejudiced, and I know they [students of color] think I am racist, but I couldn't care less about their color," color does matter because it is based on color that she talks about this particular group of girls in her class. Does she talk about the White girls? If we are able to see our whiteness, then we begin to recognize that White is the unnamed norm and that everything that is other than White is marked. In our attempt to *not* point out that which is other, however, are we perpetuating a denial of difference? "Why do I have to say Black person if I'm telling a story about a person and I don't say White person?" In Marcia's attempt to treat Blacks and Whites as equals, is she denying difference and a recognition of Blacks in her classroom?

Tom's unease over the number of teachers who carry Christian values into the classroom is also an interesting reaction in the context of a discussion of absences. Because a significant number of teachers who participated in the multicultural education class openly acknowledge the Christian values they take into the classroom and impose on their students, he is made aware of an otherwise absent presence, much in the same way that he may become aware through continued conversations and self reflexivity of the absent presence of White values which he carries with him and imposes on his own students. He essentializes an understanding of Christian, assuming a rigid, conservative, negative value system, at the same time not recognizing the values that he imposes as a White male teacher. Whether or not he is well-meaning is not the point. The point is

that as teachers of all ethnic and racial backgrounds, we impose a value system on our students, some elements of which we recognize and voice, some elements of which we are unaware.

Discussion of Implications

Based on my attentiveness to and analysis of the silences, the implications which follow focus on the strategies employed (or not recognized) by multicultural educators and/or teacher educators who do not pay attention to the silences and who continue to perpetuate a sameness. Because whiteness continues to function as an unnamed norm, it goes unnoticed, uninterrupted, and safe from a critique by Whites. The colorlessness of whiteness makes it hard for Whites to see (Dyer, 1988) and, therefore, critique whiteness. Because as Whites we do not have to attend to difference or because we are able to choose to do so, White privilege remains elusive and unintelligible to our White selves. It is, however, less difficult, and often the case that persons of color can quickly critique "whiteness" because for them it is not the unnamed norm, it is the always present and "visible" norm against which they are measured.

Multicultural Education: A Well-Meaning Albeit Misguided Agenda

Much of teacher education (both preservice and inservice) which advances itself as multicultural education is positioned unproblemmatically from the assumed perspective of White, for the purpose of learning about the Other.

Marcy I really liked that lesson on learning styles, in fact I looked at it for another class I'm taking this summer, but it really didn't tell you how to reach, you know, the multicultural education student.

What is the multicultural education student? The use of this label by Marcy would seem to indicate that which is other than herself, in other words other than White. It also implies that the "multicultural education student" is different, other, knowable, controllable, and fixed. Many pages and much dialogue is spent on "understanding" the Other, unfortunately, this is where the conversation often breaks down. An understanding of the Other is based on a fixed, essentialist

understanding of the Other; an understanding of culture unproblematized and metamorphosed into a predictable, knowable, containable construct.

In order for multicultural education (and schools) to break free of this insidiously seductive succession, a challenging of "business as usual" must occur. However, such a transformation is not possible until teacher educators begin to recognize and problematize the essentialist understanding that they impart to future teachers. To continue to present the prejudices upon which American schools are grounded is nothing new. To present the importance of an examination of Whiteness as it impacts the ways in which teachers (systems) respond to students is.

Carolyn I looked through the whole syllabus and everything; When are we going to get to the point in this class where we are going to get some tools, . . . I mean, are we just going to keep going over this every single week, about, you know, the inequalities and so forth.

When Carolyn makes this statement, she is acknowledging that the inequalities exist, and in an offhand way indicates, "This is nothing new. What do I do about these students that I have in my classroom?"

What is new is where she as a White teacher fits into this picture. She tries earnestly to treat all of her students the same, so what is the problem? The problem is that she (and others) can claim an awareness of prejudices which exist, but they can distance themselves from the discourse because "they aren't prejudiced," because they treat all of their students "the same." However, change does not occur, for without an examination of themselves as White and the attending implications of Whiteness, the perpetuation of color blindness (equals equality, equals sameness) continues. And as Frankenberg (1993) writes, color evasiveness (blindness) is not a failure to notice color, but is a way racial discourse serves to avoid color (i.e., race). And an avoidance of color is an avoidance of an examination of both the Self and the Other -- a denial of hybridity and the risk of being changed. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1996) writes about denial of both race and gender.

> Blinded by the timeworn myth that the US is a genderless "melting pot," society takes solace in the false security such an illusion creates. It is both easier/safer to say that skin color and sex do not matter in the scheme of American life, than to question the contradictions induced by such a noble concept (p. 2).

It is easier for Marcy to say that color doesn't matter than to acknowledge that it does matter and that her "color" as a White teacher matters.

Marcy I am having trouble with the Black girls in my class. I'm not prejudiced, and I know they [students of color] think I am racist, but I couldn't care less about their color.

In order for multicultural education to become a transformative force in the lives of teachers and students, the way we approach the education of teachers to be multicultural educators will have to radically shift. I do believe that the questions I ask of the silences are questions for educators interested in a continuing dialogue around race in education. I do believe that we must acknowledge as Cornel West (1993) writes, that race does matter. But to say that race does matter does not mean that our only message is that Whites are racist, that Whites are the oppressors, and that all people of color are at a disadvantage. "How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perception and response to these issues" (West, 1993, p. 3).

To continue perpetuation of multicultural education as diversity (sameness), masking difference, is to continue a discussion of racial issues that denies that we do in fact have different perspectives based on our racial and/or cultural position.[7] It is to deny that teachers respond to their students in ways which are in many cases determined based on their constructions as Whites or as persons of color. It is to overlook the opportunities for the creation of rich experiences (on the part of both teachers and students) if these perceptions and differences are not acknowledged and used in the classroom. It is to deny the opportunity for honesty and confrontation in favor of silence and dismissal. One of the teachers who participated in my study has come to the point where she recognizes the differences, she talks about the differences, and is thus able to engage the differences in an honest, meaningful way with students.

Engaging Difference in the Classroom: Pedagogical Practices

A pedagogy that engages race and culture in the classroom is a pedagogy that invites difference, acknowledges difference, and creates a learning environment in which all students are encouraged to learn as a result of their difference. It is a pedagogy in which students are seen not

as different connoting deficiency, but are seen as different with the potential to educate others in the classroom as a result of their difference. How teachers engage race and culture in the classroom is important not only for White teachers, but for all teachers.

A pedagogy which engages race and culture in the classroom does not silence uncomfortableness but addresses that uncomfortableness. It does not subscribe to a model which silences oppression and conflict, but rather tries to understand oppression and conflict. A pedagogy which engages race and culture invites the incongruities of lived experience and lived history into the classroom. It does not attempt to white wash those experiences and histories in order to make them more palatable and pleasing.

Lisa — How does an examination of whiteness shape the way you see yourself in relation to your students? (long pause)

Marcia — It makes me realize how they perceive me more, and I don't think I thought about it for a long time. I always thought that I come across as who I am, as a person, but for a student of color, I may come across as a stereotype of what they have as whiteness. There may be some students in the class that find me that way, or maybe think that I'm part of the power system, and whatever the prejudice might be, and it has made me think about that more in-depth whereas for a long time I never thought about it. I just thought it was an individual basis and I don't think you can assume that. It makes me, I guess I think through things a little bit more in terms of color, or culture, or class.

It makes, me want to be more honest and open with my kids, and so if they have these feelings, if they perceive me doing something for a certain reason, because of color or whatever, I want to know that. I don't know how it has changed me other than I think there is more honesty, more discussions in the class. I'm not afraid to approach those kinds of issues.

Lisa — When I was walking into the school this morning, I was looking at the students and wondering what do they see or think when they look at me? They don't know me. I'm a stranger, I'm another White person.

Marcia — I walk around feeling that way a lot. I don't want to be their buddies, that is not my goal . . . I want them to realize that I understand . . . I don't want to be just another White teacher. I want to be someone who listens to what they have to say.

Carolyn — I hope that if I am one of the first White figures that these children are exposed to on a daily basis, that it would have the type of nurturing and positive feeling that Joann [an African American woman] expressed the first time that she went up North and was exposed to Whites [outside her experience] and other than kindergarten teachers, it could be one of the first . . .. I don't think I've looked at my class as different colors, but that's the whole premise of perceiving through White eyes, and I've had to learn that.

Lisa Acknowledging that I am White and that you are different from me, or that I am different from you, but not ignoring it. And one of the things that I think I have been guilty of, if you ignore race then you don't offend anyone, If you just act like everybody is the same. That's a lot of how I was taught to interact with people, and you're shaking your head that maybe that was the same with you [referring to Carolyn].

Because White teachers have not seen themselves as raced or as having a "culture," a pedagogy which engages race and difference in the classroom is of greater significance to them as White teachers. For White teachers to acknowledge their position as White teachers as different (not better) than their students is to engage a pedagogy which asks the question evoked by a reading of Judith Levine (1994); the question must be not only what is whiteness (and what is different than whiteness), but once located, what is one to do with it?

Paradigms for Teacher Education

An important aspect of my future work as a follow-up to this study will be to examine my absences (silences) and those of other teacher educators, specifically White teacher educators. How do we perpetuate these same silences as we work with White teachers like those who engaged in an examination of whiteness with me? How can we begin to make our own silences heard to ourselves so we can, in turn, help others learn from these same silences?

Having worked with novice and experienced teachers, and also reflecting on my own experiences as a student, it is my belief that a vital component of teacher education should be to develop educational experiences which provide opportunities for future teachers to critically examine the instructional decisions that they make in their classrooms on a daily basis. I believe that there is an absence of a critical examination by all teachers of their own subjectivity in relation to that of their students and the assumed positions which they as teachers may unknowingly be supporting. Because of the invisibleness of race with White teachers, however, a critical examination of subjectivity in relation to students of color takes on more urgency. It is my hope that teacher educators can provide a philosophical position from which teachers can interrupt "accepted" ways of thinking as they begin to formulate their own educational philosophy, particularly as it relates to the implementation of an integrated curriculum and radical pedagogy.[8]

The issue then becomes how to create processes or strategies for helping preservice and inservice teachers become aware of their taken-for-granted white washed world; to interrupt the sameness. How can teacher educators begin to engage themselves and their students in a search for the absences and an asking of the questions present (and absent) in my conversations with this group of teachers? How might teacher educators begin to engage preservice and inservice teachers in the study of the silences and absences of privilege? What kinds of experiences might be provided in an effort to disrupt a sameness, unintelligible without the presence of such a disruption?

A paradigm for teacher education which seeks to engage White teachers in an acknowledgment of themselves as White and in an examination of themselves as raced can only do so if adequate opportunities exist whereby White teachers are forced to engage not only how others are different from them, but how they are different from others. Not in an attempt to negate the Other, but in an attempt to understand the Self in the Other and the Other in the Self. While some of my more powerful lessons have come from my work with persons of color, I have experienced equally powerful lessons in my own dialogue with the readings of persons of color (see for example Cisneros 1984, Freire 1993, hooks 1990, 1994, hooks & West 1991, Lamar 1992, and West 1993).

Shifting Paradigms

How do White teachers begin to talk about whiteness when they may not understand what it is, except through the recognition of intellectualized privilege? To remain at an intellectual level means to remain detached from fear, emotions, complicity, and a deconstruction of an identity as Whites. It means that it is not conceivable to consider Whiteness under erasure for to do so would mean to shatter an identity of ourselves as White Americans. If whiteness is an absent presence for Whites, what are the strategies that Morrison (1992) refers to for recognizing the absences and hearing the silences in order that we might be able to break those silences?

It means that although Whites need first to become cognizant of themselves as raced and specifically of their positionality as White educators, they can only do so with the assistance of persons of color. I have been fortunate to find a patient willingness on the part of an old friend and a new friend to gently show me how "color–blind" I have been. They have given me articles to read, a Black Santa Claus (the thought of a Black Santa Claus had never crossed my mind), introduced me to authors with whom I was previously unfamiliar, sat and talked with me, immersed me in a different culture, and let me know when I was "doing that White girl thing."

In a class during the early part of my doctoral program, I was writing about issues of guilt, "blindness," and embarrassment for all that I didn't know. An African American woman in the class gave me a copy of an article by Peggy McIntosh (1990), "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," and suggested that I read it. In the article, McIntosh discusses the taken-for-granted privileges which White's enjoy merely by virtue of the color of their skin. Some of the examples may seem to some as trivial (e.g., I can purchase Band-Aids which are flesh-colored and they more-or-less match the color of my skin), however, they underscore an important reality, that White is the invisible norm which Whites often do not see. White was the invisible norm that I did not see. I didn't have to think about being White because I had been surrounded by Whiteness all of my life, much like the fish who swims in water, unaware of its presence but dependent upon it for life, unable to live in its absence.

An important aspect of my future work as a follow-up to this study will be to continue an examination of my absences (silences) and those of other teacher educators, specifically White teacher educators. How do we perpetuate these same silences as we work with White teachers like Anne, Carolyn, Marcia, Marcy, and Tom? How can we begin to make our own silences heard to ourselves so we can, in turn, help others learn from these same silences? How can we engage in meaningful dialogue with other persons of color as a process for making our White selves intelligible to ourselves? How might we help our students do the same?

I hope that my journey will be helpful to others who embark on their own. I have experienced a disequilibrium necessary for transformation (Britzman, 1986). May my questions function as a disruptive force for others who seek the transgression of boundaries.

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[1]Frankenberg purposefully chooses not to use the label "color blindness" because it connotes a negative physical disability. She says "it is misleading in that this discursive repertoire is organized around evading difference or acknowledging it selectively rather than literally not 'seeing' differences of race, culture, and color" (pp. 272-273).

[2] While I recognize that race and class are inextricably linked, and I do not deny the importance of class when engaging the topic of race, for purposes of this study I focus on issues of race.

[3] Although I embrace the concept of hybridity as put forth by Bhabha (1994) and acknowledge that the use of "race" as a distinct category is in itself problematic, recognizing that race is nothing more than an arbitrary and artificial category (Marshall, 1993), I consciously choose to use this distinction as it provides entry into the discourse using language which is understood and interpretable. I do not do so naively, however. I do so with the knowledge that I will have to trouble this deliberate act of naming and classifying.

[4] For a conventional understanding of triangulation see Lincoln and Guba 1985, and Reinharz 1992.

[5] The research participants, with the exception of one, have asked that I use their first names as I present their narratives and questions. All other names referred to in the context of the conversations are pseudonyms.

[6] Were I to ask this question again I might phrase it as "How do you identify yourself?" or "Describe your identity to members of the group."

[7] One need only recall the reactions and headlines in newspapers across the United States the day following the verdict in the O.J. Simpson trial. As reported in the New York Times:

> Then, as the voice of the court clerk intoning "not guilty" came over the restaurant's radio, Charmon Savage, a kitchen worker who is black, jumped up, punched both fists, and exclaimed, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"
>
> Geraldine Foney, the restaurant manager, who is white, lowered her head with disgust in her eyes. . .
>
> The scene at the Pasqua Bar was repeated in thousands of different settings across the country yesterday, with reactions that seemed often to be shaped by race -- especially by race . . .
>
> At the Texas Bar-B-Q in downtown Dallas, a black-owned restaurant, a couple of black men greeted the verdict with eruptions of elation. Several white customers quietly left shortly afterward (Gottlieb, 1995, A1).

[8] bell hooks (1994) writes about a radical pedagogy as including the work of critical (emancipatory) and feminist perspectives. Her understanding is in part based on the work of Paulo Freire (1993/1970) who approaches learning and teaching as liberatory. I refer to Chris Weedon (1987) for an understanding of a critical feminism as "ways of

understanding social and cultural practices which throw light on how gender [also race and class] power relations are constituted, reproduced and contested" (p. vii). My definition of radical pedagogy, informed by the work of hooks (1994), Freire (1993/1970), Weedon (1987), Giroux (1988), and Bhabha (1994) is a pedagogy which attempts to upset the ways in which schools perpetuate sameness through oppressive essentialist discourses. Such an understanding of radical pedagogy is hopeful, celebratory of difference, and political. It requires a reciprocal opening for change (of both teachers and students) as a prerequisite to creating a learning context which invites honesty through dialogue.